



# CARES COMMUNIQUE

JULY 2003

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NATIONAL: [www.va.gov/CARES](http://www.va.gov/CARES)

NETWORK 2: [www.va.gov/visns/visn02/cares](http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/cares)

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## IMPORTANT CARES UPDATE

*As part of our continuing efforts to keep you informed about the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES), the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York is providing the following updates to our stakeholders and employees.*

### **Network 2's CARES Commission Hearing will be held in Syracuse on Friday, September 19.**

CARES is the VA's proactive response to meet the future health care needs of veterans in the 21st century. CARES will enable more veterans to receive care that is accessible, appropriate and convenient by putting the facilities, health care workers, and financial resources where veterans need them most. CARES is a realignment study that will positively affect the way VA delivers care - health care services will be enhanced; not reduced.

In our last CARES *Communiqué*, we provided all our stakeholders (including employees) a summary of Network 2's Market Plan submission to the CARES Planning Commission. This Market Plan stated our proposed solutions to each of the identified Planning and Non-Planning Initiatives. (Please see May CARES *Communiqué*.)

Network 2's Market Plan (along with 19 other Networks) was reviewed by Dr. Robert H. Roswell, M.D., Under Secretary for Health and continues to be reviewed by teams made up of headquarters and field employees, a special Clinical Work Group, as well as the CARES program office, national veterans service organizations, and DoD representatives.

As part of the CARES process, these reviewing teams and the Under Secretary for Health continually

go back to the Networks to seek more information and additional options. This part of the process was originally planned to take six weeks, however, in order to develop the best overall national program to serve veterans future health care needs - more time is needed - which is why the original CARES Commission hearing scheduled for this summer was delayed until September.

This month, (June), six Senators (the Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Jon S. Corzine, Tom Daschle, Bob Graham, Edward M. Kennedy, Frank Lautenberg, and Charles E. Schumer) wrote a letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony J. Principi questioning the CARES process. They had learned that alternative options were being considered after the Networks had submitted their Market Plans that included stakeholder input.

Fifteen of 22 Networks, including Network 2, were asked to look into the possible option of consolidating a two-division facility into a single inpatient campus while preserving current nursing home beds and inpatient long-term mental health programs, as well as considering converting several smaller inpatient facilities to outpatient care facilities - going from 24-hour per day operation to an 8-hour per day operation. The consideration of every viable solution

## **CARES Update** (continued)

has always been part of the CARES process. That includes better use of existing resources and the placing of additional and future resources where veterans need them most. The goal of the CARES process is to identify the infrastructure VA will need to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century quality health care to 21<sup>st</sup> century veterans. There is no national goal to either reduce or increase VA's physical infrastructure including facilities used for long-term care or long term psychiatric care. The CARES plan will provide the statutory level of nursing home beds established by Congress and provide a mental health treatment program with appropriate long-term inpatient care. However, there will be localized changes to improve medical care for veterans.

Our Network was asked to consider options, and one is for the Batavia VA to maintain an outpatient clinic but relocate long-term care beds to Buffalo, Bath and/or Canandaigua VA Medical Centers.

This information along with the information submitted by the other Networks will be incorporated into the Draft National CARES Plan and then given to the CARES Commission. The CARES Commission will then hold hearings to solicit stakeholder input prior to the Plan being given to the Secretary for final decision in December. Network 2's CARES Commission hearing is scheduled for September 19, 2003 and will be held in Syracuse, location to be announced.

If you have additional questions regarding the CARES process please do not hesitate to contact your local Public Affairs Officer, listed on the front of this newsletter.

Or visit the CARES Websites:

National: **[www.va.gov/CARES](http://www.va.gov/CARES)**

Network 2: **[www.va.gov/visns/visn02/cares](http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/cares)**